

Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Program

Annual Report

October 2011

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I. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to fulfill the requirements set forth by Section 20-2.2-10 of the Rhode Island General Laws. In accordance therewith, this report provides an overview of the Recreational Saltwater License Program for Rhode Island, offers a brief review of the status of state-based recreational fishing assessments, and sets forth a proposed FY12 programmatic budget, drawing upon the license fee revenues received since April 2010 and projected through June 2012.

II. Overview of License Program

a. Background

The State of Rhode Island enacted legislation in January 2010 establishing a new Recreational Saltwater License Program for Rhode Island. The program has two primary purposes:

1) It provides a state-based alternative to federal saltwater angler registry requirements, which are administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) pursuant to the 2006 Amendments to the federal Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act (section 401(g)) (hereinafter referred to as the “Magnuson Act Amendments”).

2) It provides a source of state funding for programs and activities that benefit marine recreational fishing interests in Rhode Island.

The Magnuson Act Amendments mandate the establishment of a national registry program for all saltwater anglers, for use in conducting accurate marine recreational fisheries statistical surveys; those surveys serve as the backbone of marine fisheries management programs for the recreational fishing sector. In December 2008, NMFS promulgated the final rule creating the registry, and also established an option for States to develop their own state-based licensing programs as an alternative, provided that the state programs meet federal criteria.

The RI license fees -- \$7/year for residents (under age 65), \$10/year for non-residents, and \$5 for a 7-day license – are designed to both cover the administrative costs of the license program and provide additional support to programs and activities that serve the needs and interests of saltwater recreational fishermen in Rhode Island.

The statute establishing RI’s Recreational Saltwater License Program – RIGL Chapter 20-2.2 – was shaped and supported by a Recreational Marine License Study Group, co-chaired by the R.I. Department of Environmental Management and the R.I. Saltwater Anglers’ Association. The group included representatives from a variety of recreational fishing groups and interests from Rhode Island.

The statute includes a section titled *Accountability and oversight* (RIGL Section 20-2.2-10). Pursuant to that section, the RI Department of Environmental Management is charged with preparing an annual report that details the number of recreational saltwater licenses issued, the total amount of license fee revenue received, the expenditures made during the prior year from the license fee account, and how the Department plans to allocate and use the fee revenue during the next year. The report is also slated to include any additional, relevant information relating to the administration and enforcement of the licensing program, and the status of state-based recreational fishing assessments and stock assessments.

The statute calls upon the Department to submit the report to the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council, and for the Department and Council to then conduct one or more public meetings to solicit input from recreational fishermen and the general public. The Council is then tasked with preparing an addendum to the report, setting forth its opinion on whether the licensing program is meeting its intended purpose, and offering any recommendations for modifying the program. The report and addendum are then to be submitted to the Rhode Island General Assembly.

b. Status

The RI Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish & Wildlife, Marine Fisheries Program (hereinafter referred to as the "Division") developed the RI recreational saltwater license program early in 2010, and the program officially took effect on April 15, 2010.

As established by the statute, anyone wishing to recreationally fish or spearfish in the marine waters of Rhode Island must possess either a RI state license, a state license from a reciprocal state, or a federal registration. The requirement solely pertains to those harvesting, or attempting to harvest, finfish for non-commercial purposes. Exemptions are provided for the following categories:

- Children under 16,
- Anglers fishing on licensed party or charter boats,
- RI residents who are blind or permanently disabled, and
- RI residents who are on leave from active military duty.

RI residents over the age of 65, and active military personnel stationed in RI, are eligible to obtain RI state licenses at no cost.

The new federal registry requirements also pertain to for-hire vessels, requiring that they either register federally or be subject to state-based licensing. Pursuant to a previously enacted state statute – RIGL section 20-2-27.1 – Rhode Island requires for-hire vessels (charter and party boats carrying recreational fishermen) to obtain a RI party and charter boat license.

In the summer of 2010, the Division submitted the new RI recreational saltwater fishing license program, and the existing RI party and charter boat license program, to NMFS for review. On October 25, 2010, NMFS and the Division entered into an MOU, pursuant to which the Division agreed to regularly collect and transmit to NMFS the contact information generated by the two programs.

On the basis of NMFS' review and approval of the RI license programs, and the commitments set forth in the MOU, the State of Rhode Island was officially designated as an exempted state for all anglers, spearfishers, and for-hire fishing vessels on November 8, 2010 – enabling the RI recreational saltwater fishing license program, and the RI party and charter boat license program, to serve as a valid, legal substitutes for the federal registry.

During 2010, a federal registration was available at no cost. Beginning in 2011, NMFS enacted a \$15 annual fee for the federal registration.

Because the RI program did not take effect until April 15, 2010, and because the federal registration did not have a fee during 2010, it was difficult to assess the RI program, vis-à-vis participation and fee revenues, during its inaugural year. 2011 is a more telling year with regard to program status. To date, all license fee revenues not retained by the program vendors have been deposited into a restricted receipt account. There have not yet been any expenditures made from the account.

c. Benefits

The key benefit associated with the new RI license program is that it provides a *cost-effective* alternative to the federal program. The \$7 (resident) and \$10 (non-resident) fees for the RI license compare favorably to the \$15 fee for the federal registration. The RI fees also happen to be lower than the fees charged by most other states. What's more, under the RI program, there is no fee for licenses issued to RI residents over the age of 65 and active military personnel stationed in RI. Under the federal program, the \$15 fee applies to everyone. Also, the RI program provides for a short-term (7-day) license at a reduced cost (\$5); no such opportunity is offered by the federal program.

In addition to being less expensive than a federal registration, the RI license has *broad applicability*. The Rhode Island license affords reciprocity, whereas the federal registration does not. Rhode Island resident license holders can fish in neighboring state waters without having to get a neighboring state license, and neighboring state license holders can fish in Rhode Island waters without having to get a Rhode Island license. Rhode Island license holders can also fish in federal waters without having to obtain a federal registration.

Rhode Island currently enjoys reciprocity with New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine. Pursuant to Rhode Island's licensing statute, Rhode Island will extend reciprocity to any other state that offers reciprocity to Rhode Island.

The federal and state registry and license programs are designed to improve the ***quality and accuracy of marine recreational fishing data***. In turn, the improved data will help to ensure that state recreational fishing regulations, flowing from regional fishery assessments and management programs, are more effective, fairer, and based on sound science. Pursuant to the MOU signed between the Division and NMFS, all Rhode Island license data is now being entered into a new national database, enabling the new federal recreational fishing data management program, known as MRIP, to more readily survey recreational fishermen, spearfishers, and for-hire vessels and, thereby, more accurately assess recreational catch and effort data. Rhode Island recreational fishermen and spearfishers stand to directly benefit from such improved assessments, as the Division is better able to target assessments and tailor state regulations in a way that more effectively addresses the needs and interests of Rhode Island's marine recreational fishing community.

The new state-license and federal registry programs will also provide the first ***full accounting of the scope the recreational saltwater fishing*** and spearfishing in RI, and throughout the U.S., and will thereby help to more fully demonstrate anglers' and spearfishers' economic, conservation, and marine stewardship contributions.

The Rhode Island license program has been designed with a view to maximizing the ***ease and convenience*** of obtaining a license. Anyone with access to a computer and printer can obtain a license, on the spot, in the time it takes to enter one's name, address, phone number, birth date, and if applicable, credit card information. The license is also available at an increasing number of vendors throughout the state.

The statutory provisions governing the protection and use of the Rhode Island license fee ***revenues provide significant benefits and opportunities*** for Rhode Island's marine recreational fishing community. The license fee revenues cannot be used for any purpose other than administering and enforcing the Rhode Island license program, managing recreational fishing programs in Rhode Island, and improving recreational fishing access and infrastructure throughout the State. Conversely, fees generated by the federal registry are deposited into the U.S. Treasury and provide no direct benefits for recreational fishermen.

A modest portion of each Rhode Island license sold -- \$2 for every license sold online, and \$3 for every license sold via a vendor -- is dedicated to covering the administrative costs of the license program itself. In this way, the ***program covers its own costs and is self-sustaining***. The balance of the revenues derived from license sales are deposited into a restricted receipt account, which is managed by the Department and subject to the exclusive-use restrictions noted above.

Thanks to the long-standing federal Sport Fish Restoration Program, which provides dedicated federal funding for marine recreational fishing programs, Rhode Island has an opportunity to leverage every \$1 collected via the Rhode Island license program with \$3 in federal funds, thereby strengthening the capacity of both programs to

work together to provide enhanced benefits and opportunities for marine recreational fishermen in Rhode Island.

d. Implementation

Web-Based System & Local Vendors

Section 20-2.2-7 of the statute establishing the license program authorizes and directs the Department to engage the contractual services of a state-approved vendor to develop and implement a web-based system that serves as the sole means for obtaining licenses. The vendor is also responsible for servicing authorized licensing agents who can vend licenses at their establishments.

As part of the initial program development stage, the Department entered into a formal agreement with Rhode Island Interactive (RII), which administers the Rhode Island state government web portal, known as RI.gov. Pursuant to the agreement, RII is responsible for developing and implementing the web-based licensing system. In close coordination with the Division, a webpage was developed that allows anglers and spearfishers to obtain a license, using a credit card for all fee-based licenses. The webpage is directly linked to a RIDEM website, known as **Saltwater.RI.Gov**, that serves as the focal point for the license program. The RII webpage serves as the means for both issuing licenses, and for collecting all of the relevant contact information at the point of sale for the national registry.

As an alternative to acquiring a license via the internet, anglers and spearfishers may also acquire a license at authorized vendors – namely, bait and tackle shops and other stores that sell fishing equipment. To date, there are sixteen authorized vendors (up from just seven vendors at the start of the 2011 fishing season); several more are expected to be added by the start of the 2012 fishing season. RII is responsible for handling the business arrangements with each vendor, and the vendors utilize the same web-based portal that the public uses for issuing licenses. RII handles all billing and remittance and also provides technical support. Vendors must pay an annual fee of \$75 to RII to cover service costs.

To cover the overall costs of administering the web-based license program, RII retains \$2 for each license sold via the internet. If a license is sold by a vendor, RII retains \$1 and the vendor retains \$2. Neither RII nor the vendors receive any compensation for no-fee licenses issued to RI residents over the age of 65 or active military personnel stationed in RI.

RII provides all angler contact information (name, address, phone number, date of birth – and if provided, email address) to the Division monthly via electronic transfer. The confidentiality of the data is protected via the use of encryption. The Division, in turn, provides the data to NMFS' MRIP program for incorporation into the national registry. RII also provides an internet-based reporting mechanism for exclusive use by the Department in accessing license status, angler counts, and revenue. Such access aides

the Department in the areas of law enforcement, fisheries management, and fiscal management.

Information & Outreach

The rollout of the Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing License involved considerable outreach to the Rhode Island angling community. As previously noted, the Division established a webpage – www.saltwater.ri.gov –that provides direct access to the portal where licenses can be obtained. The page includes a detailed FAQ section, covering all aspects of the license program, as well as a link to all authorized license vendors, with their contact information. Also included on the page are links to Rhode Island’s recreational fishing regulations; the locations of all public boat ramps that provide access to marine waters in Rhode Island; and other information pertinent to recreational saltwater fishing in Rhode Island. A print-out of the saltwater.ri.gov webpage is attached to this report.

The Division issued a major press release when the license program first went into effect, and has since issued periodic press releases reminding anglers and spearfishers about the program. See examples attached to this report.

The Division also developed a fact sheet, informational cards and brochures for dissemination at public events, such as the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association annual fishing show. During the 2010 and 2011 shows, the Division joined forces with RII at a booth to provide information on the new license program, answer questions, and issue licenses on the spot. The shows offer a great opportunity to interact directly with the recreational fishing community, and the Division intends to maintain a presence at this show for years to come.

To help increase awareness regarding the license program in the field, the Division created weatherproof vinyl signs that were placed at fishing access points throughout the State. The signs feature an illustration of the license and clear text informing the public that the license is required and how it can be obtained.

Free Fishing Day

In accordance with the statutory allowance for one free fishing day a year, during which all license requirements are waived, the DEM Director declared a free fishing on Governor’s Bay Day in 2010. That declaration is intended to occur annually, although it was inadvertently missed in 2011. It will be resumed in 2012.

e. Licenses Issued, Revenues Received: 2010-2011

During the 2010 calendar year, a total of 15,697 Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses were issued, via both internet and vendor sales, resulting in \$98,040 in total license fee revenues. The portion of that total retained by RII and the local vendors to cover their administrative costs was \$27,137, resulting in a net deposit of \$70,903 into the license account. Table 1 provides a full breakdown of all licenses issued by type and source for 2010.

Table 1
RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses Issued During 2010.

License Type	# of Licenses	Fee Revenues	Amount Deposited Into License Fund
<i>Licenses Issued via Internet</i>			
Resident Full Year	7,707	\$53,949	\$38,535
Nonresident Full Year	2,845	\$28,450	\$22,760
Resident 7 Day	36	\$180	\$108
Nonresident 7 Day	795	\$3,975	\$2,385
Resident Over 65	2,353	\$0	\$0
Active Duty Military	378	\$0	\$0
<i>Licenses Issued by Vendors</i>			
Resident Full Year	643	\$4,501	\$2,572
Nonresident Full Year	583	\$5,830	\$4,081
Resident 7 Day	3	\$15	\$6
Nonresident 7 Day	228	\$1,140	\$456
Resident Over 65	109	\$0	\$0
Active Duty Military	17	\$0	\$0
Totals	15,697	\$98,040	\$70,903

As of September 23, 2011 a total of 36,973 Rhode Island Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses have been issued during the 2011 calendar year, via both internet and vendor sales, resulting in \$241,895 in total license fee revenues. The portion of that total retained by RII and the local vendors to cover their administrative costs to date has been \$74,189, resulting in a net deposit of \$167,706 into the license account. Table 2 provides a full breakdown of all licenses issued by type and source, to date, for 2011.

Table 2

RI Saltwater Recreational Fishing Licenses Issued To Date During 2011
(Through 9/23/11).

License Type	# of Licenses	Fee Revenues	Amount Deposited Into License Fund
<i>Licenses Issued via Internet</i>			
Resident Full Year	16,565	\$115,955	\$82,825
Nonresident Full Year	4,737	\$47,370	\$37,896
Resident 7 Day	92	\$460	\$276
Nonresident 7 Day	1,335	\$6,675	\$4,005
Resident Over 65	3,156	\$0	\$0
Active Duty Military	773	\$0	\$0
<i>Licenses Issued by Vendors</i>			
Resident Full Year	6,710	\$46,970	\$26,840
Nonresident Full Year	2,026	\$20,260	\$14,182
Resident 7 Day	14	\$70	\$28
Nonresident 7 Day	827	\$4,135	\$1,654
Resident Over 65	642	\$0	\$0
Active Duty Military	96	\$0	\$0
Totals	36,973	\$241,895	\$167,706

The tables illustrate that the majority of licenses are being issued via the internet: 90% in 2010, and 72% to date in 2011. The tables also illustrate that the breakdown of licenses issued to residents vs. non-residents was about 71% resident/29% non-resident in 2010; and about 75% resident/25% non-resident to date in 2011 (calculations exclude active military).

The tables also reflect a significant increase in licenses issued in 2011, over 2010. That increase is likely due to several factors:

- 2010 was the first year of the license program.
- The Federal Registry administered by the NMFS was free during 2010, but increased to \$15 in 2011.
- More anglers and spearfishers are becoming aware of the new license requirement.
- DEM Law Enforcement is conducting more compliance inspections, and issuing more citations to individuals who are caught fishing without a license.

It is anticipated that the total number of licenses issued during the 2011 calendar year will approach 38,000, and total revenues deposited into the license fund will approach \$175,000. It is further anticipated that the numbers of licenses issued, and the total revenues deposited, will continue to increase steadily each year, for at least the next several years.

III. Status of State-Based Fishing Assessments

Rhode Island's recreational catch and effort data is currently collected via the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). MRFS houses this data in a database used for estimating catch and effort statistics related to marine recreational fishing. The data is collected by two independent, but complementary, surveys. Effort data are collected by random telephone sampling in coastal counties. Catch data is collected by intercept interviews with anglers at fishing access sites. Data from the two independent surveys is combined to produce estimates of fishing effort, catch, and participation. The number of fish caught in a particular time period and fishing area is estimated from the estimated number of fishing trips, and mean number of fish caught per trip. The Division has a contract in place with IFC Macro Inc. to carry out both aspects of the MRFS. IFC Macro conducts both the phone and intercept surveys, relays the data for approval by the Division, and then provides the data to the MRFS. The number of phone and intercept interviews and related statistics collected by IFC Macro during 2010 are displayed in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3

RI Phone Interviews Conducted by IFC Macro during 2010 and Response Rates

Category	Number of Calls	Percent of Calls
Non-Response	24,362	33.36 %
No Contact	19,551	26.77%
Contacted No Response	4,811	6.59%
Response	48,662	66.64 %
Respondent ineligible	42,639	58.39%
Eligible Non-Fishing Households	5,677	7.77%
Eligible Fishing Households	346	0.47%
Total Calls	73,024	100 %

Table 4

RI Intercept Interviews Conducted by IFC Macro during 2010 and Refusal Rates

Months	Successful Interviews	Refused Interviews	Percent Refused
March – April	46	9	16.4%
May – June	395	108	21.5%
July – August	527	415	44.0%
September - October	432	214	33.1%
November - December	100	54	35.1%
Totals	1500	800	34.8 %

Regarding the phone interviews, the strikingly low percentage of eligible fishing households reached –346 “hits” out of 73,024 attempts, or less than one-half of one percent -- clearly illustrates the shortcoming of the MRFSS, and the benefits to be derived by transitioning to the new system (MRIP) whereby calls will be made to known Rhode Island saltwater anglers, via the registry of licensees, rather than random calls to numbers from Rhode Island phonebooks.

Regarding the intercept interviews, note the relatively high refusal rate, as well as the fact that no intercept interviews were conducted in January or February. The new MRIP system is designed to improve the spatial and temporal distribution of interviews (e.g., conducting more at night, and during the winter months, and in locations other than major access sites and marinas), which will help to improve the precision of the estimates. That initiative, combined with a State-supported initiative to increase the number of intercept interviews conducted, promises to vastly improve the quality and accuracy of Rhode Island’s recreational catch and effort data.

IV. Issues & Initiatives: 2011

a. Increasing the Number of Local Vendors

Although the internet remains the most convenient means for obtaining a license for most people, it is apparent that a significant number of people would prefer to go to a local store or shop. Such individuals may either not have, or not be comfortable utilizing, a home computer and printer; or wish or need to pay for their license using cash.

As of the date of this report, there are sixteen local vendors authorized to issue licenses at their places of business (up from just seven vendors at the start of the 2011 fishing season). The locations of the sixteen vendors cover the major population areas of Rhode Island, including Block Island, but it is recognized that adding more vendors to the program will make it easier for more people to get their licenses, thereby helping to increase compliance with the program.

With a view to incentivizing more local businesses, particularly those that service recreational fishermen, to become vendors, the Division applied for and was awarded a grant from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to administer a vendor-incentive program. Pursuant to the program, the Division is offering to loan computers and printers to any establishment that is willing to vend licenses for a period of five years. The project began in March of 2011. All bait and tackle shops throughout RI were mailed an announcement detailing the program and informing them of the opportunity to apply. Several have responded, and the Division is continuing to accept applications. The Division has enough funds to provide equipment for up to 50 vendors.

b. Developing Regulations for the License Program

In April 2011, the Division initiated the process of enacting regulations for the license program. The Division intends to promulgate those regulations, pending the completion of this report. The draft regulations largely codify the key statutory provisions governing the license program, i.e.:

- Licenses are required for anyone who fishes or spearfishes recreationally in Rhode Island waters for finfish, with such activities defined;
- Licenses may include a valid Rhode Island license, a valid license from a reciprocal state, or a federal registration;
- Reciprocal states identified;
- Anglers and spearfishers must be in possession of a valid license when angling or spearfishing, or have it in close proximity; and
- Licenses are not required for anyone who is exempt, per the prescribed exemption categories; and where, appropriate, anglers and spearfishers who are exempt must carry applicable proof.

Additional provisions set forth by the draft regulations include:

- Licenses are required for anyone fishing for squid; and
- Licenses are not required for anyone holding a federal Highly Migratory Species Angling Permit, issued under the angler's name.

The draft regulations also included a provision requiring all license holders to carry a photo ID, but the Department has decided to drop that proposal, based on comments received at the public hearing.

c. Meeting with the Recreational Marine License Study Group

On June 14, 2011, the Division held an ad-hoc meeting with the members of the Recreational Marine License Study Group – the Group that worked closely with the Division on the development of the original saltwater license bill. The purpose of the meeting was to review and get input on a draft budget for the saltwater license restricted receipt account. The draft budget presented to the Group was essentially identical to the one set forth in this report. The Group responded favorably to the proposal, which helped set the stage for this report. The Division is interested in reconvening the Group – perhaps under the new name of Recreational Marine License Task Force – on a regular basis for the purpose of obtaining feedback and input regarding the license program and issues associated therewith. Such a process would be in addition to, not in lieu of, the Council and public comment processes set forth by the license statute. The names and affiliations of the Group members are listed in an attachment to his report.

d. Addressing Additional Options for Obtaining Licenses

Although the internet and the increasing number of local vendors throughout the State offer convenient opportunities for anglers and spearfishers to obtain a license, it is recognized that there are still a large number of people who either don't own a computer and printer or don't have a convenient means of accessing a local library or local vendor. While this constituency may be a minority, it apparently constitutes a significant portion of the recreational fishing community in Rhode Island. If too many people perceive the process of obtaining a license as a roadblock, it will turn people away from fishing, which is clearly counter to the spirit and intent of the license program.

The Division is committed to exploring options that would make it easier for people without a computer and printer or a convenient means for getting to a local library or vendor to obtain a license. Such options could include a mail-in or call-in option. Either option would entail additional administrative costs, and it will be a policy decision as to whether funding from the budget for the license fee account should be redirected to cover the costs of a call-in and/or mail-in option.

Initial indications are that costs would range from approximately \$25,000 for a contract with a call center to approximately \$47,000 to hire an administrative clerk working out of the Division's office. While the call center option is appealing, given its relatively low cost, callers would not be afforded access to well-informed individuals, and so many if not most questions regarding the license program and recreational fishing in Rhode Island would likely have to be redirected to the Division. An administrative clerk, working directly for the Division, would be more well-versed on licensing- and marine fisheries-related questions and thus able to provide better customer service. Also, a clerk could process mail-in license applications as well. The major downside to the hiring of a new fulltime staff person is the relatively high cost, and the challenge of securing a new staff position within the very restrictive state government system.

e. Allowing Volunteer Contributions to the Restricted Receipt Account

There have been suggestions made that some anglers and spearfishers would welcome the opportunity to make an additional, voluntarily contribution to the restricted receipt account associated with the license program at the time they purchase their license. It is unclear whether this could be done without additional statutory authority, but if there is enough interest in the part of the Rhode Island recreational fishing community to pursue the initiative, the Division would be more than willing to further explore it.

f. Streamlining the Online License Renewal Process

Currently, license holders seeking to renew their license each year must re-enter all of their contact information. The Division is coordinating with RII in an effort aimed at streamlining the renewal process, namely, by having prior contact information recalled and re-inserted, with an onus on the licensee to verify that it is up-to-date and accurate.

Since phone numbers are the most important data field, the system may still require phone numbers to be re-entered every year, to help ensure that they are up-to-date and accurate.

V. FY12 Program Budget

a. Preface

As noted previously, in accordance with the provisions of the RIGL Chapter 20-2.2, all monies from the saltwater license fees are deposited into a restricted receipt account and can only be used for the following purposes:

- Administering and enforcing the Rhode Island license program;
- Managing Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries, with particular reference to improving state-based recreational fishery catch and effort statistics and stock assessments; and
- Enhancing recreational fishing opportunities in the State.

The Division undertakes a range of programs that address and support recreational fishing interests in Rhode Island. Those programs are largely funded via federal sources, namely: the US Fish & Wildlife Service through the Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) Program; and grants received from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The SFR Program, which is derived from excise taxes on fishing and boating equipment and is structured as a user-pay/user-benefit program, is the bedrock, providing some \$2 million annually; however, that grant required a 25 percent non-federal match (i.e., nearly \$700,000). The annual NMFS funding amounts to about \$200,000. The Division receives a very modest amount of state general funds each year – approximately \$150,000 for all marine fisheries-related programs and activities. And there is only one other source of non-federal funding: that relates to recreational interests: the receipts from annual sales of non-resident recreational shellfishing licenses and recreational lobster fishing licenses (totaling about \$120,000/year).

The primary state programs pertaining to sport fishing fall into the following general categories:

- Fish stock assessments
- Recreational catch and effort estimates
- Management plans and regulations
- Boating and fishing access
- Artificial reefs and habitat protection/enhancement
- Public information, outreach, and education
- Enforcement

It behooves Rhode Island to utilize the revenues from the saltwater fishing license program in a way that a) is consistent with the licensing statute, b) addresses the priority

needs and interests of the recreational fishing community in Rhode Island; and c) maximizes opportunities and benefits by leveraging federal SFR funds.

b. Expenditures

As of the date of this report, there is a total of \$238,609 in the restricted receipt account. That total includes the \$70,903 collected during 2010 and the \$167,706 collected to date in 2011. It is anticipated that the account will grow to at least \$250,000 by June 30, 2012, and so the proposed FY12 Programmatic Budget is based on that amount.

The Division recommends making the following expenditures during FY12:

1. Enhanced MRIP/MRFSS Data Collection (\$82,500)

Proposal. Expand the recreational catch and effort data collection program for Rhode Island (under the MRIP/MRFSS sampling umbrella) fourfold, to increase the overall precision of the State-based estimates and better enable mode-specific (e.g., shore-based) estimates. The \$82,500 investment will leverage an additional \$247,500 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$330,000 in total programmatic benefits. The \$330,000 will supplement the existing contract Rhode Island has with Macro, which conducts the angler intercept surveys.

Rationale. The MRFSS program, which is evolving into the new MRIP program, is the source for all marine recreational catch and effort fishing assessments. Data collected via the program is used to estimate catch (landings and discards) and effort by species/state/mode/wave. Estimates of catch and effort are used to develop status of the stock for all species, including striped bass, summer flounder, scup, tautog, bluefish, winter flounder, cod, black sea bass, and weakfish. In addition, indices of abundance using catch per unit of effort are incorporated into age-structured models to track abundance in comparison to other fisheries independent surveys. Estimates of catch and effort are quite variable due to sampling levels, which are directly correlated to the level of funding for each survey.

The marine recreational catch and effort fishing assessments yield fishery-dependent information which, coupled with the non-fishery dependent trawl and seine surveys, serve as the basis for marine recreational fishing regulations. The accuracy and fairness of recreational fishing regulations is directly related to the quality and precision of the assessments. What's more, to the extent that the Division can increase the surveys and sampling of fishermen in Rhode Island, the Division will have a better ability to tailor Rhode Island regulations in a way that best supports the interests of the Rhode Island fishing community. Of particular interest is the ability to pursue mode splits – e.g., differential regulations for shore-based fishermen versus boat-based fishermen. That can only be done if there is enough survey and sampling done of the two modes to enable relatively precise estimates of respective catch and effort.

The proposed enhanced data collection initiative will restore sampling to prior levels (2002-2005), and in conjunction with the vastly improved MRIP program, help to significantly boost the quality and accuracy of the data used to assess Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries.

2. Boating/Fishing Access I (\$50,000)

Proposal. Undertake improvements to the Galilee Boat Ramp. The \$50,000 investment will leverage an additional \$150,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$200,000 in total programmatic benefits.

Rationale. The ramp in Galilee is one of the most popular and important ramps in the State, providing direct access to the salt ponds and south shore, as well as Block Island. The ramp is heavily utilized and in need of rehabilitation.

The Galilee ramp ranks high on the Division's list of priority boating/fishing access sites in need of upgrade or improvement, and is a worthy candidate for funding via the license fee account. In 2010, the Division completed work on one of the largest boat ramps in Rhode Island, the Mt. Hope Boat Ramp in Bristol. Three other projects are slated to be undertaken, under separate funding, beginning in 2012:

- New boat ramp at East Transit Road in Providence
- Improvements to ramp and parking at Marina Park Boat Ramp in South Kingstown
- Improvements to ramp and parking at Third Branch Boat Ramp in Middletown

Other boating/fishing access projects that are on the Division's priority list, and will be targeted for future funding, include:

- Goddard Park Boat Ramp, Warwick
- Weaver Cove Boat Ramp, Portsmouth
- Bold Point Boat Ramp, East Providence
- Pawtucket Boat Ramp, Pawtucket

3. Boating/Fishing Access II (\$25,000)

Proposal. Enhance the Division's boating/fishing access site maintenance program. The \$25,000 investment will leverage an additional \$75,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$100,000 in total programmatic benefits.

Rationale. The Division has over 60 state-owned and operated boating/ fishing access sites used by an estimated 28,000 boats that are less than 24 feet in length. The Division is responsible for maintaining these areas, but lacks adequate resources to undertake all of the work that's needed on a regular basis. The proposed allocation of funds from the license fee account, particularly when leveraged with federal funds, will

significantly boost the Division's ability to properly maintain state-owned boating/fishing access sites throughout Rhode Island.

4. Recreational Fisheries Management Support (\$23,500)

Proposal. Hire a new fulltime staff person in the Division's Marine Fisheries Program who will be responsible for coordinating a range of projects and activities that relate directly to priority marine recreational fishing issues. The \$23,500 investment will leverage an additional \$70,500 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$94,000 in total programmatic benefits.

Rationale. The Division has never had a staff person dedicated to marine recreational fishing programs. The Division proposes hiring such a person, to focus solely on some or all of the following issues:

- Coordinating the overall license program, in concert with Rhode Island Interactive and local vendors; and serving as the conduit for data management between the program and NMFS, pursuant to the Division's MOU with NMFS.
- Coordinating recreational fishing assessments (i.e., coordinating the Macro contract per item #1 above); serving on the ACCSP's Rec Tech Cmte and monitoring the transition of MRFSS into MRIP; advancing Rhode Island's eRec logbook program
- Coordinating the development of marine recreational fishing management programs in Rhode Island; applying recreational fishing assessments to recreational management programs; developing mode-specific recreational fishing management programs and other recreational fishing alternatives for important ASMFC-managed species (e.g., bonus fluke for shore-based anglers; extended seasons for scup; increased bag limits for black sea bass).
- Serving as a principal point of contact for recreational fishing groups and organizations in Rhode Island.
- Assisting with the coordination of the Division's boating/fishing access program – including assessment, maintenance, and management of existing sites; pursuing grants to upgrade/improve existing sites and develop new sites; and conveying information on access opportunities to the Rhode Island recreational fishing community.
- Assisting with the coordination of Rhode Island's artificial reef program (per item #5 below)

5. Artificial Reef & Fish Stock Assessment Support (\$50,000)

Proposal. Support the development and implementation of an artificial reef plan for Rhode Island, and the continuation of finfish surveys in Rhode Island waters. The \$50,000 investment will leverage an additional \$150,000 in federal (SFR) funds to provide \$200,000 in total programmatic benefits.

Rationale. Two key programs funded via the federal SFR grant are the development and implementation of an artificial reef plan for Rhode Island, and the continuation of the Narragansett Bay trawl survey, and the juvenile finfish seine surveys conducted in the Bay and the coastal ponds; the latter being the most important annual finfish fisheries surveys in Rhode Island waters conducted by the Division. To date, these programs have been funded by the State's federal SFR grant, and matched entirely with commercial fishing license fee revenues. Given the importance of these programs to the recreational fishing community, it makes sense to use a portion of the recreational fishing license fees to cover the non-federal match requirements of the SFR grant pertaining to these programs.

6. Public Education, Information, and Outreach (\$19,000)

Proposal. Conduct a public outreach campaign, pertaining to the license program, via radio and newspaper ads and use of social media. Also, develop a 2012 Rhode Island Recreational Fishing Guide, modeled after the guide that Massachusetts developed in 2011.

Rationale. Although compliance with the new license program has generally been good, it is clear that a large number of recreational fishermen and spearfishers remain unaware of the program, not only in terms of the need to obtain a license, but also with regard to the purpose of the program and the benefits it provides to the recreational fishing community. Since the primary purpose of the license program is to develop a comprehensive database of contact information for all recreational fishermen and spearfishers, it behooves the State to make a modest investment in a PR campaign, aimed at increasing awareness among the recreational fishing community regarding the license program, particularly during the summer season, thereby enhancing compliance and bolstering programmatic support.

In 2011, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries published a 2011 Recreational Fishing Guide. The publication, done in a colorful and appealing magazine style, offers a wealth of information of interest to the marine recreational fishing community in the Commonwealth. While the Division continues to provide information to the Rhode Island recreational fishing community via the Division's website and an annual abstract that features recreational and commercial fishing regulations, the magazine would enhance the Division's ability to connect with and inform recreational fishermen, and serve to promote recreational fishing in Rhode Island. The Rhode island guide would help to inform fishermen on the issues associated with the licensing program and the benefits associated therewith – drawing upon some of the information set forth in this report – as well as other issues of priority interest to the community. The Guide produced by Massachusetts is partially funded via advertising, and that angle may be worth pursuing for the Rhode Island version as well.

VII. Looking Ahead to FY13

It is reasonable to expect that the license program, and associated receipts received, will continue to grow at a modest pace over the next several years. As previously noted, it is anticipated that the total number of licenses issued during the 2011 calendar year will approach 38,000, and total revenues deposited into the license fund for the calendar year will approach \$175,000. ***For planning purposes, the FY13 Programmatic Budget is conservatively projected to be \$200,000.***

Among the issues that should be considered in future funding cycles is the importance of effective enforcement, both in terms of compliance with the license program and with recreational fishing regulations. Rhode Island's marine recreational fishing community has long supported sound, effective enforcement, and the recreational license program can serve as a vehicle for lending more support to the Department's Division of Law Enforcement.



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Division of Fish & Wildlife Recreational Saltwater Fishing License Information

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Welcome to the home page for the Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing License. To obtain your license, click the link on the left. If you have any questions regarding the license, please read the information provided below. After reading the information, if you still have questions, you may contact DEM's Marine Fisheries Program at (401) 423-1923 (M-F, 8:30 am - 4:00 pm).

Who needs a license?

In order to fish recreationally for finfish in Rhode Island's marine waters, saltwater anglers and spearfishers must have:

- A RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License, or
- A National Saltwater Angler Registration, or
- A recreational saltwater fishing license from a reciprocal state

Where can I get a RI license?

Licenses are [available online, via this website](#). Licenses are also be available from [participating vendors throughout the State](#), including several bait and tackle shops.

Where can I get a federal registration?

Go to www.countmyfish.noaa.gov, or call 888-674-7411.

What is the cost of the RI license? What is the cost of the federal registration?

The cost of a yearly RI license is \$7 for Rhode Island residents, and \$10 for non-residents. A temporary seven-day RI license is available, for both residents and non-residents, for \$5. Those fees are set by state law, and are not subject to change.

The federal registration is \$15 annually.

What about seniors and active military personnel?

RI residents who are over the age of 65, or active military personnel stationed in RI, must obtain licenses (or be registered federally), but the RI license is free for these groups.

Who does not need a license?

No license or federal registration is required for:

- Anglers who are under 16 years of age
- Anglers fishing on licensed party or charter boats
- Anglers who hold Highly Migratory Species Angling Permits
- Anglers who are on leave from active military duty
- Anglers who are blind or permanently disabled

Additionally:

- Licensed *commercial fishermen* do not need a recreational license (or federal registration) if they are fishing commercially. However, they do need one if they are fishing recreationally.
- Licensed *party or charter boat operators* do not need a recreational license (or federal registration) if they already have a Party and Charter Boat license and are fishing in party/charter mode. However, they do need a recreational license (or federal registration) if they are fishing recreationally, without paying customers aboard.
- Anyone who is a *non-fishing passenger* on a boat on which others are fishing does not need a recreational license (or a federal registration), as long as the passenger does not engage in any angling or spearfishing activity.
- Anyone who is recreationally fishing in a way that does not involve angling (defined as any use of a hook and line), or spearfishing (defined as any use of a spear or powerhead), does not need a recreational license (or a federal registration). Thus, a recreational license (or federal registration) is not needed to fish recreationally using recreational *cast nets, minnow traps, dip nets, umbrella nets, seine, or eel pot*. (But the [state regulations covering recreational beach seines/bait nets](#) must be adhered to when collecting bait species.)
- Anyone who is recreationally fishing for *shellfish, lobsters, crabs, or squid*, does not need a recreational fishing license (or a federal registration). However, a separate RI recreational lobster license is needed to take lobsters, and for non-residents, a separate recreational shellfish license is needed to take shellfish. Additionally, non-residents may not harvest blue crabs.

Where does the license apply?

RI waters: RI's recreational fishing license applies in all of RI's marine waters, which begin at the inland edge of all tidal water areas and extend seaward out to three miles. The defined boundaries separating RI's freshwaters and saltwaters

can be found in section 2.6 of DEM's [Freshwater and Anadromous Fishing Regulations](#).

Federal waters: The RI license also applies in all offshore federal waters, which extend seaward from the seaward edge of all state waters.

Other state waters: The RI license also applies in the state waters of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, as well as in the waters of all other states that honor RI's license (a list of all other states will be provided here as soon as information on those states is collected).

When does the license expire?

All yearly RI licenses expire each year on December 31. All yearly RI licenses must be renewed annually. All seven-day RI licenses expire seven days after their activation date.

Do I still need to follow all applicable rules and regulations governing marine recreational fishing?

Absolutely. The license simply enables you to fish legally, in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations. Go to DEM's [marine fisheries home page](#) for all relevant information. For a condensed version of the minimum sizes, possession limits, and seasons for recreational fisheries, go to the [Legal Minimum Sizes and Possession Limits page](#).

What is the difference between the federal registration and the RI license? What if I already enrolled in the Federal Registry?

The key difference is cost. The federal registration cost is \$15 annually. The annual fee for the RI Recreational Saltwater Fishing License is \$7 for residents and \$10 for non residents, and those fees are fixed by state law. What's more, under the federal program, fisherman over the age of 65 and military personnel are subject to the \$15 registration requirement. Under the RI program, there is no fee for the licenses issued to RI residents over the age of 65 and active military personnel stationed in RI.

Another key difference is reciprocity. The RI license affords reciprocity, whereas the federal registration does not. RI license holders can fish in neighboring state waters without having to get a neighboring state license, and neighboring state license holders can fish in RI waters without having to get a RI license. RI license holders can also fish in federal waters without having to obtain a federal registration. If you only have a federal registration, you can fish legally in RI waters (you do not need to also obtain a RI license), and in offshore federal waters, but you cannot fish legally in MA, CT, ME or NY waters, since their programs do not honor federal registrations.

The third key difference is that all of the license fee revenues from the RI license go directly into a restricted receipt account. In accordance with state law, the license fee revenues may only be used for the management and enforcement of recreational fishing programs and for improvements to recreational fishing access and infrastructure throughout the State. Fees generated by the federal registry are deposited into the U.S. Treasury and provide no direct benefits for RI.

What if I am not a RI resident, but have a license from my home state or some other state, and plan to fish in RI waters?

RI will honor any license from any state that also honors RI licenses. Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine and New York licenses are reciprocal, and so they apply in RI waters. A list of all other reciprocal states will be provided here as soon as information on those states is collected.

What if I am not a RI resident, and don't have a license from my home state or some other state, and plan to fish in RI waters?

You can readily obtain a RI non-resident license. However, be advised that you may or may not be able to use that license in your home state (e.g., if you are a Connecticut or Massachusetts resident, you will need to obtain a Connecticut or Massachusetts license to fish in Connecticut or Massachusetts waters).

Is a freshwater/hunting/saltwater combination license available?

No, not at this time, but DEM does intend to explore this as a future option.

How will the license fee revenues be used?

All license fees will be deposited in a restricted receipt account, managed by DEM. In accordance with the state law governing the license program, the license fee revenues can only be used to administer and enforce the license program, improve the management of RI's marine recreational fisheries, particularly with regard to developing more accurate assessments of recreational catch and effort, and enhance recreational fishing access opportunities in the State. The license fee revenues cannot be used for any purpose that is unrelated to marine recreational fishing in RI.

What is the purpose of the RI license and the federal registry?

The state-license and federal-registry programs are designed to improve the quality of marine recreational fishing data. In turn, the improved data will help to ensure that recreational fishing regulations are fair, effective, and based on sound science. Additionally, the new programs will provide the first full accounting of the scope of recreational saltwater fishing in RI, and throughout the U.S., and will thereby help to more fully demonstrate anglers' economic, conservation, and marine stewardship contributions.

By way of background:

- The current assessment program, known as MRFSS, has been in place since 1979. It involves complementary telephone and dockside-intercept surveys to collect effort and catch data, respectively. The phone calls are made randomly, using phone books. The program has serious shortcomings, largely because there is no universal database of recreational fishermen to draw upon for survey purposes.
- In 2006, the U.S. Congress addressed the recreational data collection problem by amending federal law (the Magnuson Act) to require the National Marine Fisheries Service to establish a universal registry of all saltwater anglers and to revamp the MRFSS program.
- NMFS responded by establishing the new National Saltwater Angler Registry and replacing MRFSS with a new Marine Recreational

Information Program (MRIP). The new registry program, along with the complementary state license programs, will generate a comprehensive list of all registered/licensed anglers for use in conducting the phone surveys.

- Rhode Island's new Recreational Saltwater Fishing License Program has been approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). The approval means that Rhode Island has achieved full legal status as an exempted state under the National Saltwater Angler Registry Program.
- Rhode Island's exempted-state designation became effective on November 8, 2010, following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the RI Department of Environmental Management and NOAA Fisheries. The MOU acknowledges that the RI license program meets all of the requirements of federal law, and that RI's license database will be incorporated into the new national database of recreational anglers and spearfishers.
- The Registry program gives states the option of developing their own state license programs as a substitute for the federal registry. The federal registry is \$15 annually. Also, the registry does not afford reciprocity with other states.
- In January 2010, the RI General Assembly enacted a new state law establishing a new RI saltwater license. The law took effect in January 2010. The new state license program gives RI anglers the option of obtaining a relatively inexpensive RI state license, in lieu of a federal registration. The RI license can also be used in all waters throughout southern New England, whereas the federal registration does not cover fishing activities in neighboring state waters. The reciprocity provisions associated with the RI license also extend to all other states in the U.S. that honor RI licenses.
- All RI license information, as well as that collected by NMFS and other states, will be incorporated into a national "phone book" of recreational anglers, enabling the new MRIP program to readily survey current fishermen and more accurately assess recreational catch and effort data. That information will lead to improved state-based assessments and more fair, accurate, and effective management programs for Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries.



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News Release

RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908
(401) 222-2771 TDD/(401) 222-4462

For Release: April 15, 2010

Contact: Gail Mastrati 222-4700 ext. 2402

DEM ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF NEW RECREATIONAL SALTWATER FISHING LICENSE

**Also Available: New Electronic Recreational Saltwater Fishing
Logbook**

PROVIDENCE - Rhode Island's new Recreational Saltwater Fishing License is now available. The license is available via a simple, user-friendly website: www.saltwater.ri.gov.

The cost of the license is \$7 per year for RI residents and \$10 per year for non-residents. There is also a temporary 7-day license available for \$5. The license is free for anglers who are over 65 years of age and for active military personnel who are stationed in Rhode Island.

No license is required for anglers under 16 years of age, for anglers fishing on licensed party and charter boats, for anglers who are on leave from active military duty, and for anglers who are blind or permanently disabled. A full description of all exemption categories is available on the license website.

Rhode Island's new license program gives recreational saltwater anglers - and recreational spearfishers, who are also covered -- the option of obtaining a relatively inexpensive state license, in lieu of a federal registration. The RI license enables the holder to fish legally not only in all RI marine waters, but also in all federal waters and all state marine waters

throughout southern New England (as well as in all other reciprocal state marine waters throughout the U.S.). The federal registration does not cover fishing activities in neighboring state marine waters, including Connecticut and New York. The federal registration, available at www.countmyfish.noaa.gov, is free for 2010, but is expected to cost as much as \$25 in 2011 and thereafter. Rhode Island does honor the federal registration, as well as licenses issued by reciprocal states, so anglers fishing in RI marine waters are covered if they have a RI license, or a license from a reciprocal state (such as Connecticut or New York), or a federal registration.

The RI license is currently only available via the [saltwater.ri.gov website](http://saltwater.ri.gov). The license will also be available at participating vendors, such as bait and tackle shops, by June 1st of this year.

The new RI license program is a complement to the new federal registry and the license programs that are in place, or pending adoption, in all other coastal states throughout the U.S. The programs are designed to improve the quality of marine recreational fishing data. In turn, the improved data will help to ensure that recreational fishing regulations are fair, effective, and based on sound science. All RI license information, as well as that collected by National Marine Fisheries Service and other states, will be incorporated into a national "phone book" of recreational anglers, enabling the new Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) to readily survey current fishermen and more accurately assess recreational catch and effort data. Additionally, the new license and registry programs will provide the first full accounting of the scope of recreational saltwater fishing in Rhode Island, and throughout the U.S., and will thereby help to more fully demonstrate anglers' economic, conservation, and marine stewardship contributions.

All Rhode Island saltwater license fees will be deposited in a restricted receipt account, managed by DEM. In accordance with the state law governing the license program, the license fee revenues can only be used to administer and enforce the license program, improve the management of Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries, and enhance recreational fishing access opportunities in the State. The license fee revenues cannot be used for any purpose that is unrelated to marine recreational fishing in Rhode Island.

Complete coverage of all issues pertaining to the new Rhode Island license is provided on the [saltwater.ri.gov website](http://saltwater.ri.gov).

Also available: New Electronic Recreational Saltwater Fishing Logbook

In conjunction with the release of the new Rhode Island recreational

license, DEM's Marine Fisheries Program, in conjunction with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, has also developed - and is now making available - a voluntary electronic recreational saltwater fishing logbook, known as "eREC." Anyone who wishes to participate in the program is welcome to do so, on a voluntary basis. The program enables anglers to contribute to more accurate assessments of recreational species while simultaneously maintaining a personalized electronic record of their recreational fishing activities. The information collected through the program will better enable Rhode Island fisheries scientists and managers to either corroborate or counter state-specific fisheries information from other sources, and thus better enable DEM to develop recreational measures for Rhode Island that are based on accurate catch and effort data. The information collected from participants in the logbook program will be kept confidential and will only be used by DEM to improve finfish stock assessments in Rhode Island. As a benefit to the angler, the logbook provides cumulative summaries of information on all species caught by the angler, organized by date, numbers and size of fish, etc. The information is presented in graphical and tabular formats, enabling the angler to see his/her own catch histories in real time. For more information on the program, and to sign up, go to www.saltwater.ri.gov.

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News Release

RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908
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For Release: July 9, 2010

Contact: NOAA FISHERIES:
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(301) 713-9501

RHODE ISLAND:
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(401) 423-1926

[Gail Mastrati](#), DEM, Director's Office
(401) 222-4700 ext. 2402

SUMMERTIME REMINDER FOR RI SALTWATER RECREATIONAL FISHERMEN: BAIT, TACKLE, REGISTER!

**Rhode Island Anglers Now Required to Have Either a State
Recreational Saltwater Fishing License OR a Federal Saltwater Angler
Registration**

PROVIDENCE - According to new state and federal laws, Rhode Island saltwater recreational fishermen are now required to either purchase a State Recreational Fishing License OR to register with the National Saltwater Angler Registry before they drop their line in the water this year. State and Federal officials caution that failing to do so could impact a new program that is improving the way NOAA Fisheries collects and reports recreational fishing data. The improved database will help ensure the long-term sustainability of saltwater fishing.

The laws apply to all nonexempt anglers and spearfishers who fish

recreationally in Rhode Island marine waters and/or in offshore federal waters. Exemptions include those who are: under 16; fishing exclusively on licensed party or charter boats; on leave from active military duty; blind or permanently disabled; holders of saltwater licenses issued by other exempt states; or holders of Highly Migratory Species Angling Permits.

To date, a total of 28,763 Rhode Island residents have registered with NOAA, and 10,752 fishers have obtained a RI license.

Federal registration is quick, easy and FREE for all anglers in 2010. Fishermen simply need to log on to www.countmyfish.noaa.gov, or call 1-888-MRIP-411. They will receive a registration number that will allow them to begin fishing immediately, and will later receive a registration card by mail.

A **Rhode Island license** can be purchased for \$7 by state residents and \$10 by non-residents. A seven-day license is also available for \$5. The state license is FREE for Rhode Island residents over the age of 65, and for active military personnel stationed in Rhode Island. Licensees will automatically be added to the Federal Registry. The license is valid in all Rhode Island marine waters, as well as in the state waters of Massachusetts, Connecticut, eastern New York, and other states that honor Rhode Island's license. The license can be obtained online or at participating vendors. More information can be found at www.saltwater.ri.gov.


Participation is Mandatory - and Important to Fishermen

Along with being the law, license and registration are important tools that will help fishermen and policy makers work together to better account for the contributions and impacts of saltwater anglers on ocean ecosystems and coastal economies.

The Registry is one of the bedrock changes in a national overhaul of how NOAA gathers recreational fishing data. The goal of the initiative – known as the Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP – is to provide the most accurate information possible that can be used to determine the health of fish stocks.

Reliable, universally trusted data will in turn aid anglers, fisheries managers and other stakeholders in their combined efforts to effectively and fairly set the rules that will ensure the long-term sustainability of recreational fishing.

Although MRIP teams are testing and gearing up to deploy new survey methodologies, an incomplete Registry could mean improvements would

 be put off for at least another year.

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News Release

RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908
(401) 222-2771 TDD/(401) 222-4462

For Release: June 16, 2011

Contact: Gail Mastrati 222-4700 ext. 2402

SUMMERTIME REMINDER:

**IF YOU ARE A SALTWATER ANGLER OR SPEARFISHER OVER
THE AGE OF 15 YOU NEED A SALTWATER LICENSE!**

Some Exemptions Apply

Licenses are Available Online and at Participating Bait and Tackle Shops

PROVIDENCE - With the Fourth of July fast approaching and the 2011 saltwater fishing season underway, the Department of Environmental Management reminds anglers and spearfishers that a 2011 saltwater fishing license is needed to fish recreationally in all marine waters.

Obtaining a license is easy. Just go to www.saltwater.ri.gov. Have a driver's license or state identification card handy, as well as your date of birth, address, and phone number. For Rhode Island residents over 65 and for active military personnel stationed in the state, licenses are free, but still required. For all others, the \$7 fee (\$10 for non-residents) is payable using a VISA, MasterCard or Discover card. Once the information is entered, you can immediately print your license and go fishing! Anglers and spearfishers also have the option of purchasing a license at participating bait and tackle shops and sporting good stores, using cash or a credit card. A list of participating vendors may be found on the www.saltwater.ri.gov website.

No license is needed for children under 16; anglers fishing on a licensed party or charter boat; anglers who hold a Highly Migratory Species Angling permit; anglers or spearfishers who are on leave from active military duty; or anglers or spearfishers who are blind or permanently disabled.

For those visiting RI, or only planning to fish for a few days, a 7-day license is also available for \$5.

The Rhode Island license covers you wherever you want to fish - all Rhode Island marine waters, all offshore federal waters, the waters of neighboring states, and all other reciprocal state marine waters throughout the United States. The federal registration is honored in Rhode Island waters, but it now costs \$15, and it is not honored by neighboring states. Other state licenses are also honored in Rhode Island waters, but they generally cost more than a RI license.

The Rhode Island license expires at the end of each calendar year. So anyone who obtained a Rhode Island license in 2010 must obtain a new license for 2011, if they plan to fish this year. Likewise, anyone who obtained a federal registration in 2010 needs to renew for 2011; and again, it makes more sense to obtain a RI license than to renew a federal registration.

The purposes of the Rhode Island license program are twofold. First, all Rhode Island license information, as well as that collected by the federal government and other states, is being incorporated into a new national "phone book" of recreational anglers, enabling the new Marine Recreational Information Program to readily survey current fishermen and more accurately assess recreational catch and effort data. That information will lead to improved state-based assessments and more fair, accurate, and effective management programs for Rhode Island's marine recreational fisheries. Second, the license fee revenues, which are held in a protected account, are solely dedicated to enhancing recreational fishing opportunities in Rhode Island and supporting improvements to Rhode Island's recreational fisheries. The program also covers its own administrative and enforcement costs, and is thus self-supporting.

Additional information on the program is available at www.saltwater.ri.gov.



Rhode Island Recreational License/Registry Study Group



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Daniel Maia

President, Ocean State Surfcasters

Albert Conti

Snug Harbor Marina
Representative, RI Marine Trades Association

John Mazurak

President, East Bay Anglers

Robert Ferioli

President, Bristol County Striper Club

David Preston

President, Narragansett Surfcasters

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